

Docket Item # 12-B
MASTER PLAN AMENDMENT #2001-0003
REZONING #2001-0003
LINDSAY MOTOR CAR SERVICE

Planning Commission Meeting
December 4, 2001

ISSUE: Consideration of a request for amendment to the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan Chapter of the 1992 Master Plan to (1) change the land use designation from OC/Office Commercial to CSL/Commercial Service Low, and (2) change the zoning from RB/Residential and OC/Office Commercial to CSL/Commercial Service Low.

APPLICANT: Lindsay Motor Car Inc.
by J. Howard Middleton, Jr., attorney

LOCATION: 1601-1608 Osage Street and 1601-1609 Peach Street.
[block bounded by Kenwood Avenue, Peach Street, Osage Street,
Fern Street (vacated) and Blessed Sacrament Church property]

CITY COUNCIL ACTION, DECEMBER 15, 2001: City Council approved the Planning Commission recommendation, as amended by the addition of the applicant's proffer "to develop the site to be rezoned in accordance with the development plan for the site approved with Development Special Use Permit #2001-0007."

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION, DECEMBER 4, 2001: On a motion by Mr. Gaines, seconded by Mr. Leibach, the Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the request, subject to compliance with all applicable codes, ordinances and staff recommendations. The motion carried on a vote of 7 to 0.

Reason: The Planning Commission generally agreed with the staff analysis and the applicant represented that it would file a proffer to limit the rezoning to the specific plan proposed. As to the proposed use and development, there were two major remaining issues at the hearing: the setback of the building along Kenwood Avenue and the hours of operation for the service facility.

As to the setback, the Planning Commission concurred with staff that the residential uses needed to be visually screened from the proposed commercial building. Staff had recommended a minimum setback of 27 feet adjacent to Kenwood Avenue in order to retain the existing mature trees which would buffer the service facility from the majority of Kingsgate residences. The

applicant argued that the trees could probably be saved with only a 23 foot setback and agreed to provide additional plantings to provide buffering. The Planning Commission agreed with staff that the existing trees were essential but also wanted to incorporate the applicant's proposed landscaping plan for additional plantings. To do both, the Commission approved the 23 foot setback but added a condition requiring, if the three existing trees die within five years of construction, replacement trees which are large (5 inch caliper or greater) and in an equal amount of caliper lost.

As to the issue of the hours of operation, staff, out of concern for impacts on adjacent residential uses, recommended a closing time of 9:00 p.m.; the applicant requested the ability to work on cars until 12:00 midnight. At the hearing, the applicant agreed to limit the 9:00 p.m. to midnight operation to a maximum of four employees and to activity occurring inside the building only. With those limitations, the Commission approved the extension of hours.

The other changes made by the Commission to the staff recommendations were clarifications requested by the applicant and the community.

Speakers:

Howard Middleton, representing the applicant.

Jay Parker, landscape architect for the applicant.

David Brown, North Ridge Citizens Association, spoke generally in support of the application but noted that there has not been an official meeting of the association since the staff report was produced and therefore there is no formal final position on some of the staff recommendations. Mr. Brown requested a number of clarifications to the conditions and asked that the body shop be required to relocate earlier than prior to issuance of Certificates of Occupancy.

Fran Vogel, Kingsgate Condominium Association, spoke generally in support of the application, but only with the conditions recommended by staff. She noted their concerns about traffic, particularly with respect to the opening of Peach Street.

Jack Sullivan, Seminary Hill Association, indicated the association has taken no position on the application but noted a deep concern about the expansion of commercial into the residentially zoned area and the integrity of the small area plan.

Margaret Haynes, in a letter read by Kathy Holmes, expressed support for the proposal.

Steve Colantuoni, North Ridge resident and Lindsay employee, spoke in support of the proposal.

Carlyle Ring, North Ridge resident, spoke in support.

Donald Simpson, North Ridge resident, spoke in support.

SUMMARY:

The applicant, Lindsay Motor Car Service, requests a master plan amendment and a rezoning to remove the proffered CO zoning to allow construction of a 25,798 square foot service repair facility on the 55,030 sq.ft. (1.26 acre) block bounded by Kenwood Avenue, Peach Street, Osage Street, Fern Street (vacated), and the Blessed Sacrament Church property. The subject site is located in the Fairlington/Bradlee small area plan area. The applicant also has pending applications for a master plan amendment/rezoning (case MPA/REZ#2001-0002) for a proposed subdivision of Blessed Sacrament Church property and a development special use permit application, with subdivision (case DSUP#2001-0007), in conjunction with this case.

The subject block—bounded by Peach Street, Kenwood Avenue, Osage Street and the Blessed Sacrament property—is located within the Fairlington-Bradlee planning area, in a location where residential and commercial uses converge. To the immediate west across Kenwood Avenue are the Kingsgate condominiums, to the south across Peach Street are single family residences and to the west is Blessed Sacrament Church; residential uses and supporting institutional issues continue east down both sides of Braddock Road. To the north and northwest of the block are commercial uses: the Lindsay Cadillac and Saturn dealerships, and to the northwest, an office building and the small Fairlington shopping center.

While the city's zoning map shows the northern half of the block zoned commercial (OC/Commercial) and the southern half of the block zoned residential (RB/Residential), in fact the governing zoning on the site is a proffered plan approved by the City in 1989. The proffered plan is the only thing that can be built on the site without a rezoning. The proffered plan provides for a 45,000 square foot office building not exceeding a height of 50 feet on the northern three-quarters of the site and a row of townhouses along Peach Street not exceeding 45 feet in height. The proposed rezoning to CSL/Commercial Service Low for the entire block would eliminate the existing proffer and would allow construction of a 25,798 sq.ft. repair facility on the block, with second story parking.

Staff and the community initially did not support the proposed master plan amendment and rezoning because of concerns about the intensity of the proposed commercial use next to residential and because of concerns that the expansion of commercial uses over the entire block could potentially destabilize other residential uses in the area, particularly those across Peach Street, by encouraging further commercial rezoning. The North Ridge community, in particular, was concerned about the precedent that might be created by rezoning the entire block to commercial use. Staff concluded that it would be possible to support a rezoning proposal only if that proposal had:

- 1) less of an impact on adjoining residential uses than the office building and residences approved under the zoning proffer,

- 2) lessened some of the existing impacts of the adjoining commercial uses,
- 3) provided some public benefit to the adjacent residents at Kingsgate and Peach Street, and
- 4) maintained the existing residential integrity along Braddock Road, in particularly for the Peach Street and Kingsgate blocks.

With the many changes made to the plan in response to staff and community concerns, staff believes the above goals have been met and that this proposed rezoning would have significantly less of an impact than the approved proffered zoning for 45,000 sq.ft. of office space. Staff will support the master plan amendment and rezoning with the specific conditions placed on the DSUP. Major elements of the plan addressing the above issues include:

- 1) the provision of a 35' open space along the south side of the block, providing a public benefit (public open space) and creating an appropriate transition to the residential uses south of Peach Street, strengthening the residential on that block;
- 2) the provision of a 27' open space buffer along Kenwood Avenue, with significant landscaping on both sides of the street and the preservation of existing mature trees, as well as extensive landscaping on the west side of Kenwood Avenue, providing buffering to the Kingsgate residences;
- 3) redesign of the building facade to a character more consistent with the adjoining residential uses, including the provision of a gabled roof and window treatments; and,
- 4) provision of substantial parking on-site for the Lindsay operations to reduce the impact of on-street parking for the residents in the neighborhood.

With the changes made to the plan, coupled with all of the staff conditions contained in the DSUP, staff now supports the proposed master plan amendment and rezoning and the proposed development.

The two neighborhood groups most affected-Kingsgate and North Ridge-also now support the proposal, subject to a number of conditions that are contained in the DSUP. Staff believes that the proposed project, with conditions, is now less intrusive than the project that could be built under the existing zoning proffer.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval.

BACKGROUND :

The applicant, Lindsay Motor Car Service, is requesting a master plan amendment and rezoning for seven lots of record containing 51,712 sq.ft. for the block bounded by Kenwood Avenue, Peach Street, Osage Street, Fern Street (vacated), and the Blessed Sacrament Church property.

The subject site is located in the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan. The northern half of the property is designated by the master plan OC/Office commercial and zoned OC/Office commercial while the southern half is designated RM/Residential Medium and zoned RB/townhouse residential. Although the designations were adopted as part of the 1992 plan, City Council had previously granted approval of a proffered rezoning to CO/Commercial for this block on June 17, 1989 (Ordinance 3384). The CO proffered zoning calls for a 45,000 square foot office building not exceeding a height of 50 feet on the northern portion of the site and a row of townhouses along Peach Street not exceeding 45 feet in height. Currently, the northern portion of the site is used as a parking lot for the Lindsay operations and the southern portion, which previously consisted of four single family homes, is vacant.

The applicant's request is to amend the master plan, remove the proffered CO zoning and rezone the site CSL/Commercial Service Low. This will allow Lindsay to integrate this block into the surrounding Lindsay properties zoned CSL and permit the construction of a Lindsay Lexus service facility on this property with a special use permit. The applicant proffers to grant an easement to the City for a 6,144 square foot public park which would be 35 feet wide and run along Peach Street. In addition, the applicant will preserve a buffer area with trees along Kenwood Avenue with a minimum building setback of between 19' to 27' to provide a landscape buffer screen for the Kingsgate Condominiums, located across Kenwood Avenue from the proposed service facility.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

When this application was initially filed, staff and the community expressed serious concerns about the proposed rezoning because it allows further incursion and intensification of an automotive related use adjacent to residences. Although staff was not necessarily opposed to the applicant's proposed expansion plans, staff felt the rezoning could only be supported if the facility was 1) designed in a manner that provided appropriate transitions to adjoining residential uses, 2) did not contribute to destabilization of those residential uses, and 3) if the proposal provided some public benefit to the residents. The prior proffered rezoning to CO and the 1992 Master Plan had both affirmed a desire to have the site act as a buffer between automotive and residential areas.

One approach explored with the applicant was an alternative development scheme that shifted the new service facility--the building most likely to generate activity, noise and other impacts--from the Peach/Kenwood/Osage Street block to the main lot located on Fern Street, while placing the new parking structure on the Peach/Kenwood/Osage block. The applicant objected strenuously to this approach, citing mainly operational constraints, and indicating they could not go forward with such an alternative. In any case, residents of Kingsgate, the closest residential community, expressed a preference for having the service facility next to them rather than a parking garage.

Another alternative explored with the applicant was the provision of residential units along the southern edge of the block, similar to the approach taken in the proffered plan previously approved for the site. While theoretically this approach seemed desirable, the concepts presented by the applicant showed units which were poorly designed and which provided inadequate space for open space and parking, because of the narrowness of the area available for the proposed residences. In addition, this approach placed new residential uses even closer to the automotive uses than the existing residential, increasing the potential for land use conflicts in the future. Ultimately, staff concluded that the most effective buffer and transition would be provided by open space and we worked with the applicant to reduce the size of the facility and shift the facility so that meaningful areas of green space could be provided along the southern and western edge of the site, adjacent to residential.

This extended review process allowed both North Ridge Civic Association and Kingsgate residents the opportunity to work through issues with the applicant to reach a consensus that resulted in an endorsement to support the project with recommended conditions for its approval which both groups believe are necessary for mitigating the impacts of the proposed service facility and intensification of Lindsay operations. Staff continued working with the applicant on several other issues that are discussed in greater detail in the development staff report, however the following is an outline of the remaining points upon which a recommendation of approval is based:

- Setting a portion or the entire building back further from Kenwood Avenue to ensure existing trees which provide a visual buffer for the Kingsgate residents and are designated to be saved and protected,
- Further refinement of the service center building's facade treatment so that it would be compatible with residential and pedestrian scaled.
- Additional screening and facade treatment for the Fern Street parking deck.
- Reduction to proposed hours of operation for the service center.

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- Reduction/relocation for the proposed dumpster pad site to provide additional landscape buffer area along Peach Street.

Subject to the various conditions now being recommended in the development special use permit (the development site plan), staff and the neighborhood can support approval of the master plan amendment and rezoning. Staff will not oppose amending the master plan to change the land use from Office Commercial and Residential Medium to Commercial Service Low category and to removing the proffered CO zoning to rezone the site to CSL/Commercial service low.

STAFF: Eileen P. Fogarty, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning;
Kimberley Johnson, Chief, Development;
Gregory Tate, Urban Planner;
Leslie Parrish, Urban Planner.

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WHEREAS, under the Provisions of Section 9.05 of the City Charter, the Planning Commission may adopt amendments to the Master Plan of the City of Alexandria and submit to the City Council such revisions in said plans as changing conditions may make necessary; and

WHEREAS, an application for amendment to the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan was filed with the Department of Planning and Zoning on April 5, 2001 for changes in the land use designations to the parcels located at 1601-1608 Osage Street and 1601-1609 Peach Street [block bounded by Kenwood Avenue, Peach Street, Osage Street, Fern Street (vacated) and the Blessed Sacrament Church property]; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Planning and Zoning has analyzed the proposed revision and presented its recommendations to the Planning Commission; and

WHEREAS, a duly advertised public hearing on the proposed amendment was held on September 4, 2001 with all public testimony and written comment considered; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission finds that:

1. The proposed amendment is in keeping with the character of the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan; and
2. The proposed amendment will meet the goals for the area, which include (1) preservation and maintenance of adjacent neighborhoods; (2) preservation and maintenance of neighborhood serving retail; (3) ensuring that commercial redevelopment is compatible with surrounding neighborhoods; (4) maintaining traffic circulation in the area, and (5) improving the visual appearance in the area consistent with principles of urban design; and
3. The proposed amendment is generally consistent with Planning Commission's long-range recommendations for the general development of the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan; and
4. Based on the foregoing findings and all other facts and circumstances of which the Planning Commission may properly take notice in making and adopting a master plan for the City of Alexandria, adoption of the amendment to the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan will, in accordance with present and probable future needs and resources, best promote the health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and general welfare of the residents of the City;

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NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Planning Commission of the City of Alexandria that:

1. The following amendment is hereby adopted in its entirety as an amendment to the Fairlington/Bradlee Small Area Plan section of the 1992 Master Plan of the City of Alexandria, Virginia in accordance with Section 9.05 of the Charter of the City of Alexandria, Virginia:

Change the designation of parcels located at 1601-1608 Osage Street and 1601-1609 Peach Street [block bounded by Kenwood Avenue, Peach Street, Osage Street, Fern Street (vacated) and the Blessed Sacrament Church property] from OC/Office Commercial to CSL/Commercial Service Low.

2. This resolution shall be signed by the Chairman of the Planning Commission and attested by its secretary, and a true copy of this resolution forwarded and certified to the City Council.

ADOPTED the 4th day of December, 2001.

Eric Wagner, Chairman

ATTEST:

Eileen P. Fogarty, Secretary